4: Biswas D, F.-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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SANTAL PARGANAS

Descent of the Santal is always reckoned in the male line and a man has the same totem as his father; the totem of the mother's father's line is not respected. As a female has no clan of her own, she is not a recognised member of her father's or of husband's clan and has not therefore to observe the taboos relating to their totems. But actually the Santal women do not kill any totem animal or any totem plant, just as their husbands do not kill or destory any totem animal, plant and other object. 614

Individual or sex totem is unknown to the Santals. Their totem is hereditary and not acquired. The members of a clan do not wear any distinguishing emblem or peculiar dress nor have they representations of their totem cut or tattooed on their persons or carved or painted on their houses or any personal belongings.

MARRIAGE

The Santali name for marriage is 'Bapla'. Mr. O'Malley is of the opinion that bapla is a word which very probably meant originally mutual strengthening i.e. of the two families.[1] 58. 192 114

It is strictly forbidden for any Santal to marry within his own sept (Parish). He may marry into any other sept or sub-sept to which his mother belonged. Among the Santals there is a custom that a Santal can marry a girl who is three kursis (generations) apart. There are some septs which never intermarry with one another in consequence of some ancient feud between them. A Hansdak male or a female 582 614

[1] L.SS. O'Malley, Bengal District Gazetteers. Santal Parganas, Calcutta 1910 Vol. XXII Page 134.

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eation. In many cases Bengali names that bear some resemblance to the form of the private name come into use. Thus Pulo has become Padma Lochan and Kala has become Kalachand. Ernest Soren was known throughout the countryside by the name that he received at his baptism. At the time of his *chatiar* he was given the name of Singrai, this being the name of his paternal grandfather's elder brother. From the same time he was addressed as Jhongol, thus receiving not only the private name but the outer name of the same relative, who was not then alive. Before he could walk he was usually addressed as Thenta, a name that signifies a restless bundle of mischief. Later when he was growing up he was known by his contemporaries as Dangra Sorkar, or Sorkar for short. The name Sorkar is often applied to those who are going to school, but he was known as the "bullock" Sorkar because he did not conceal his fondness for beef, whereas educated Santals are generally supposed to conform to Hindu custom and shun it. Names of relatives are bestowed without regard to whether the relatives concerned are living or dead.

The village community takes no formal notice of the growing child after the performance of the *janam chatiar* until he is ready for the ceremony of initiation, or *caco chatiar*. *Caco* is a word that means a toddler, one who is learning to walk. The ceremony, however, is not performed until the child is growing up. It is somewhat misleading to describe the ceremony as one of initiation, for in comparison with the elaborate ritual with which initiation is accomplished in many parts of the world it is a pale and colourless proceeding. In the Bankura area the performance of the rite is of an extremely casual nature. It is nevertheless the equivalent for Santals of initiation ceremonies in other societies, and it retains its importance not because of the intrinsic character of the ritual but because of certain consequences that follow from its non-observance. Unless the *caco chatiar* has been performed, no Santal boy or girl may be married, nor cremated after death. It may be that the custom has been drastically modified because of the expense involved, as the whole village should be feasted. It is now customary for families to wait until the ceremony can be performed for several children at the same time, and it is therefore delayed until the impending marriage of the eldest child makes it inevitable. In the village of Barikul, Babulal recorded a case in which the father and the mother had been living together for some years without having themselves gone through any marriage ceremonial. For both of them it had

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58 852 been a second marriage, and as they were extremely poor their plea to set up house together had been allowed and the marriage celebration that had been postponed was indefinitely suspended. The time came when they wished to arrange a marriage for their eldest son and they found themselves involved in a difficulty. Until the formal celebration of their own marriage had taken place their son could not marry because in its absence they could not carry out the *caco chaṭiar* of their boy. The problem was solved by going through one of the permitted forms of marriage themselves, after which on the same day they performed the initiation of their three sons. They were scolded by the villagers who gathered for the occasion, but again pleaded their poverty.

852 574 The whole of the population of the village is invited for the ceremony, and each person must at the very least be given two cups of beer for each child on whose behalf the ceremony is being held. The feast for the whole village is not practicable except for a very few, and it is regarded as sufficient if the village officials are presented with a meal of rice and meat or chicken curry. If possible, the midwife who presided at the birth of the children bathes them in the courtyard by pouring water over them; and if she cannot, this is done by one of the old women present. [538] [624] Water is also sprinkled over the assembled guests. The *jog-māṇjhi* recites the myth of Santal origins; beginning from the account of the creation of the world and the founding of the clans, he brings the story up to date by leading to the birth of the children in the particular family with which the villagers are at [535] that moment concerned. Then there follows a dance in the [533] courtyard, and songs are sung in honour of the family. The event is neither preceded nor followed by any period of instruction. [184] Such materials as exist for comparing the institution in different parts of the Santal country suggest that possibly its observance is of greater importance in the north, particularly in the Santal 114 Parganas. Bodding has described the ceremony, basing his 852 account on the published Santali account of the traditions.[1] Recently a long and full account of the ceremonial has been published in Santali, and this account comes from the same area but does not include a description of an actual observance.[2] On the other hand, Mr. C. L. Mukherjea's account of Santal culture to the extreme south in the state of Mayurbhanj[3] omits all

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 132]

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Santali Dictionary*, Vol. I, p. 113.
[2] Stephen H. Murmu, *Karam ar Cacu Chaṭiar*, Dumka, 1915.
[3] C. L. Mukherjea, *The Santals*, Calcutta, 1943.